



A Trial Run

a Writing David
publication

A flash fiction

A TRIAL RUN



A WRITING DAVID PUBLICATION
A FLASH FICTION



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Part 1

To Nigerian students; home and abroad

It was another cold night at Akron, a small town in Ohio just beside Pennsylvania. You were sitting on the left hand of the brown couch in your bedroom apartment in school. You stared into clock which was beside the large poster of Rihanna on the wall. You were lost in thoughts; but deep down you really had no idea of what exactly you were thinking about. "So its MDD huh?"; you whispered to yourself a little as you stretched down to quickly get a hold of your phone which had earlier dropped off your hands to the floor. As you inserted the letters on the Google search board, you spoke out once more, as though you wanted to be sure of what you were typing; M – D – D... Major Depressive Disorder; you further say after some seconds.

It was the second time and now a recognised reality and now something you could come to terms with as a psychiatrist had pointed out. You had been hit down by clinical depression the previous year while still in school. That was when it all began. At the time, you had lost your aunt who was like a mother to you, but even more prevailing already was the stress from academics akin to Nigerian tertiary institutions. The strait economic conditions coupled with the deplorable political situation of the country compounded for many students the lack of means to fend for themselves. Other deterring factors were enough to traumatised any average citizen of the country. You eventually fell ill, but did not see a doctor because the regular self-medicating with anti-malaria or typhoid pills always got the job done for you.

It was at this time stress gradually grew into depression. You were not sure if you were completely okay, but you also would not admit to yourself that you were actually depressed; because you were a 'strong woman.' This was sometime around January. You can even remember when you were trying so hard to keep your grades up despite the trying times and still heard lecturers boast; "*How do you think you would get a first class in pharmacy?*" As though you were competing with them for it. Eventually, such statements caught you in mixed feelings; because, even a first-class student was not always sure of securing a good job in the country. Or in other matters, "how does one study law in a country where the law only exists on paper?"; you wondered. You also remembered how your younger brother called you once to request for funds, only for you to find out he had to use them to pay off lecturers who demanded for bribes before students could pass. While academic stress was a major contributor to your sickness then, a more central factor was the pressure that came in with the *Gen Z* generation. You were only twenty and had already begun to feel the societal pressure towards the *get rich syndrome*. And since you were a lady, the pressure sometimes came down to how rich your boyfriend or future husband could be. So, when your peers went into various means of self-funding; both those who attached themselves to young men who earned through illegal means, and those who genuinely came up with entrepreneurship skills, you were left with a misguided self-condemnation.

Omo, John don buy e babe new whip o! You would hear that John had indeed bought a new car for his girlfriend at twenty-three, and there you were, barely able to transport yourself from *Keystone* (your base hostel in school) to the main gate. Being a student in Nigeria in this epoch was almost like you being played as handicapped against life. So, you were not so surprised the day your family doctor came in for the regular blood pressure test and got everyone bewildered to find out that you had a higher blood pressure than your parents did. As these things had played

out, it was not so difficult to now see why you had got the ‘MDD’ the first time.

You were forced to search on your mobile phone for what ‘Major Depressive Disorder’(MDD) had to do with you (as the doctor had said) on the web, because the last time you felt the same way was the previous year; when you had earlier refused to accept your deteriorating mental health. Now things had turned sour. It had already been a year since the last time. You hoped for things to get better and you eventually found a way to get on with your studies in Ohio. Back in Nigeria, you studied at the renowned University of Benin, where you were a student for only a year; a year characterised by so much frustration and stress. Now, you are a student of The Ohio State University. You had become Alice in Wonderland, until the medical reports proved otherwise.

“Argh, please not another ten thousand dollars!” You had said after viewing a pop-up notification which obstructed your previous search. It was a message from the office of the college board; you had been requested to pay in an extra ten thousand dollars on tuition. You had learnt that the United States educational system now gets little support from the state and now there is a high level of reliance on tuition fee revenue. This means that for you, being an international student automatically turned you to a *piggybox* for the school’s financial board. In more simple words you got to understand that tuition was bound to increase more frequently, and at the end, so much financial pressure comes back to rest on you once more. Worse off in your situation was that, back at home, the value of the Naira currency kept diminishing in value and seemed akin to devaluation.

Tuition alone was not the only mental draining challenge you had to face, there also the cultural shock that came with you moving into a new environment. As a matter of fact, fitting into anything new was particularly a herculean task for you. You remembered when for a whole day all you would do was lay on your bed lonely and sad but too hollow to cry. In Ohio State University, you did not meet so many Nigerians, and even

when you did, not many were freshers like you. Interacting with those who were surprisingly seemed difficult, due to some bold tribalistic tendencies that always bothered you; like students from Northern Nigeria strictly preferring to hang out with one another. You remembered how in some of your classes you were practically treated like the eighth wonder of the world. "So how does it feel to be Nigerian? My neighbour told me about his visit, about the bad roads and how dark it usually was at night over there"; your ears would be jarred up from such statements.

These also came with a wave that placed you in position of pity which you despised so much. Most times you were left with no other option than burning the night oil to prove some certain level of worth. Once, you got into a discussion with a course mate, Ivan. He was Irish, but had lived in Ohio for more than a decade. He enlightened you on how his parents had informed him to stay clear of Nigerians whom his parents classified as "bad people", especially the men. You always laughed at such stereotypical view that was borne out of ignorance, however, you could also understand why some people thought so. Though life in the States met some of your expectations, more than that however, it eventually drilled a hole inside you.

"I began wondering why the lights were all turned back on"; you turned back, and it was Akauda speaking.

Akauda was the only close friend you really had in school. She was a Nigerian as well, but did not grow up there. Akauda had been with you at your apartment since the previous day when you had swooned on your way to school. It was Akauda who took you to see the doctor that day, who further recommended you to Dr Sam; who happened to be a psychiatrist in Akron.

"Insomnia?"; Akauda asked. "Yeah"; you replied.

"Well, then I will just have to sit with you until either of us fall asleep"; Akauda had said again.

"But what is the problem really?" She further asked you.

“Clinical depression. I believe Dr Sam called it *MDD*. I was trying to find out about it in details before you came in...”

“No, I mean; what really got you into this?”

What Akauda had said swirled your mind all the way back to when it all started, from your previous year at Nigeria; and the beginning of your whole story. You looked upwards as though you wanted to read something on the ceiling and smiled.

“Well Akauda, I guess I will have to tell you how I think it all began”; you said, slightly adjusting your sitting position.

“I believe things may have all began to get severe from my experience last year. Then, I was still a student of the renowned University of Benin and I had just lost my aunt who was like a mother to me...”



Part 2

To those trapped in the battle of religious relevance and a stereotypical society

Going through the variety of building styles, the ever-serene environment, facility of accesses and well-tended parks with fountains and lakes, it is not always so difficult for one to see why Abuja is referred to as the 'Big Man's City.' A place that offers a charismatic and magical ambiance that attracts plenty locals and foreigners. One known fact about Abuja is its accommodation of top tier investors and investments and of particular reference is the real estate business which so many young men and women are now into.

Saheed Halimu, a fine young Muslim man in his late twenties. A man who had what his friends described as "a perfect height for the ladies." A smart looking young man with sharp jaws and a smooth, spade shaped beard that caught ladies off their guard. He was not a male model but he should have been one. His athletic shoulders were part of his burly physique which he always made conspicuous with his nifty clothes. Saheed possessed a leonine power and always walked with purpose and authority.

He was one of those high thinking business men and one popularly known to be slowly walking his way into something great at a very young age. Saheed was first son of his parents and a simple family. The Halimus were highly recognized and revered in their community and more particularly as faithful worshipers of Allah. The Halimus were not particularly an extremely rich family, but their name had always set a lot of things on a platter of gold for them and this was good. Saheed did not just begin to

live in Abuja like many other investors, he had basically lived there all his life as he was born there as well in a small town called Dnago.

Saheed was not much of the office man. He would rather consider his room as his office. As a result, he mostly found himself going forth and back into various law firms investing in some property deals. He eventually got registered as a client of Silverwrit Attorneys, a law firm in Wuse, Abuja.

It was 8am in Silverwrit and the first client came into the office speaking on top of his voice; “This deal cannot work out if you keep playing me like this Mr Ali!” It was Saheed and he had entered into the firm today, as usual; very early, making a phone call and speaking so loudly. At first, he was constantly cautioned about it, but eventually, everyone got used to it. Afterall, he was usually the first client to come in immediately office hours came in session. It was almost as if he drove the office ward to work. Today’s experience for Saheed was a bit different however. As he walked directly towards, Barr. Isioma Ogo’s office, a place he called his business room (Barr. Isioma Ogo was Saheed’s private attorney), a hand waved at him as if to signal him on something.

“Please, who do you wish to see sir?”; a tender voice called out.

Turning back to see the one who had spoken, he saw a young beautiful lady of mahogany black skin, who had spoken with such a soothing and enticing voice that could touch one’s soul on hearing. She was on the seat of Barr. Ogo’s secretary. It was a new face to Saheed, and one that drew him to pay attention. Saheed had stepped back in an immediate response to the lady’s call and for what seemed to be five awkward seconds, stared directly into the eyes of the secretary who had called. While still having his phone jammed to his right ear, he gazed into her eyes like he had seen a pool of liquid fire.

“I will call you back”; he said, as he had cut the call and put down his phone.

“You are new here I would assume? That explains your question. May I know your name?”; he asked.

“I am Sarah sir. Are you here to...”; as she replied, her desk telephone rang in the middle of her speech.

“Yes sir! Yes sir!”; she had said to the caller on the line.

“I am sorry for keeping you sir, Barr. Ogo would like to see you now.”

Saheed smiled as he slowly walked towards the office. The last minute he had just experienced had given him an irregular feeling. He could not recall ever having a similar feeling while talking to a lady as had done just now.

“Sarah huh?”; he whispered to himself.

Sarah Nweanyi was a very beautiful lady and in her mid-twenties. She had doe-brown eyes that gave her a queenly figure. Her hair swooped in coils over her swan’s neck. She had the kind of face that stopped men on their tracks. Sarah was the kind of woman who prized genuineness and thoughtful conversations above lipsticks and high heels. She was pretty alright, but inside she was beautiful.

Sarah was born into a Catholic Christian family who come from a village in Asaba called Umuonaji. The Nweanyis were a wealthy family. Sarah’s parents were Knight and Lady respectively in the Church. A graduate of accounting studies from the University of Abuja. Sarah was a stubborn willed lady, and as much as she was considered to be fed with a silver spoon, she peculiarly made a difference borne out of creativity and discipline. She was the kind of woman who wanted to work hard for what she wanted. Hence, she had refused her parents’ proposal to accept being moved up to a higher office in Silverwrit through their influence.

Saheed and Sarah fell into a similar and rare situation that can be described as *love at first sight*. Since the first day they had set eyes on each other; whenever Saheed walked into the office, there was always some sleek eye connection between them. Saheed had however not found the chance to make a bold move. It finally came on the day when Saheed had entered into Silverwrit in a haste. Charging through the door, he accidentally left it jamming behind him. Sarah was just behind the door when that happened, and it got all her files rambled on the ground as the

door had hit her. Just as they may have seen in movies, they both went down to pick the files and their hands touched. "Thank you sir, but I think I got it covered from here"; Sarah had said with quite the blush on her cheeks. "Firstly, my name is Saheed, not sir, and here's my card. How about I make it up with dinner tomorrow"; he finally said as they were both caught in a mild laughter. This led them to their first date. As the days grew old, they really began to get along. Saheed once came into Silverwrit to get a deed of conveyance for his newly completed building. That morning, service was a bit slow, but as he became fond of doing, he would sit in the office and talk with Sarah till he was ready to leave.

"Our house is now ready you know?" He slightly joked, as he had finally received his complete documents that day.

As a client, Saheed was almost seen like a managing director of the firm because of his many assets and family name. Most of the things he did and his relationship with the staff were not always questioned out of respect, moreover, he always knew how to give the audience what they wanted.

A year had passed since their first meeting at Silverwrit. Sarah had been promoted to the office of the secretary to the registrar and at this time was already in a relationship with Saheed for over five months. They seemed to have really loved each other, it was now a feeling more than a physical admiration or attraction. After two years together, Saheed decided to pop up the special question; "Yes Saheed Halimu!"; was Sarah's reply that day, as she smiled so hard losing all expression of words. They were both aware of their separate religious beliefs and had frequent conversations about it in the past.

"Don't worry, one week, we'll be at the mosque and the next we'll be at the Church"; Sarah would always say.

Sarah particularly always loved a challenge and saw her relationship with Saheed as the biggest one she will ever experience against all odds. And so, over time they had both decided not allow anything come between them.

“There is always a first time for everything, I trust Allah to see me through. *Tawakkal-tu-‘ala-Alla*; Saheed would often say in his defense against friends who cautioned him against getting married to an ‘infidel’.

After the proposal, came the introduction. Both Saheed and Sarah had mentioned their relationship to their parents, but they both omitted the most important detail; that they were Muslim and Christian respectively.

“Do not bring any Christian girl to this house to call your wife please! *Ittaqillah!*”; Jannat Halimu exploded as the words on Sarah came out of Saheed’s mouth. He had planned to bring her home the next day and decided to tell them everything about her.

“She is a Christian and so what *Mama*? So what *Baba*? ” he said turning to his father Mawlawi Umar Halimu.

“Attempting to bring an infidel into my home does not seem enough, you also dare to raise your voice under my roof Saheed! ”; Mawlawi Umar said as he pointed his index finger to his son.

“Will she be a Muslim? ”; Will she promise to follow Allah? Madam Jannat asked. “Honesty Saheed, I don’t know what you did to your ears all the years *Baba* emphasized Allah’s word in Sura Al-Maadia. Are you stupid boy? ”

“But she is a good girl *Baba*. ”

The arguments started off conversationally, and moved into a religious academic realm of arguments before it gradually became violent.

“If you say another word about this issue you will cease to be my son, period! ” Mawlawi Umar Halimu said angrily after he had uncontrollably slapped Saheed.

“So you have decided to disgrace this family, *eh* Amarachukwu? ”; this time, it was Sarah’s mother speaking; Lady Amaka Nweanyi.

“What will they say about us now? A whole lady and knight of the Church. *E choro e mevo m nwata!* So you have decided to disgrace this family!”, her mother said in disbelief.

“He is a Muslim not a thief. You have condemned him even before seeing him”; Sarah said in her defense.

“*Wa si onye nwe nti ka ya ga ji nu ife*”. It was Sir. Benard, the man popularly noted for his use of few words and igbo proverbs in speech, he finally spoke after some minutes of rants between Sarah and her mother. “I will only say this once my child; if you get married to that man, you will never step into this house again.”

“*Papa please don't do this to me, I love this man*”; Sarah said as she knelt down with tears running down her cheeks to plead with her father. Sarah later that evening had even brought in a priest to mediate between parties, but Sir Benard refused to come out to see anyone again on the matter. To him, he had made himself clear enough to his daughter and she was left to decide.

Both Saheed and Sarah had met their parents on the same day as they earlier agreed they would, and as it happened, neither of the parties were willing to allow even the possibility of their union. Unfortunately for them also, there were not many persons who could genuinely help them convince their parents. It was part of the disadvantages of being the children of wealthy and renowned families.

“I d-don't think this can work”; Saheed said with his voice thick with tears. He was on the phone with Sarah.

Sarah's heart thumped like a drum in her chest. She was devastated. “So, we end it like this? Can't we run and start a new life somewhere or something? What happens to the engagement ring?”

“Keep the ring!”

“I love you so much Sarah, but I don't think I can have you losing your family for the rest of your life my sake. It does not seem fair to me”; Saheed replied.

“Even at this time, you are still all selfless Saheed”; Sarah said, with a little chuckle.

“If this is what we decide, things will never remain the same after now you know!”

“I am so confused Sarah. How about we see tomorrow. Let’s take the night to think about everything and decide. It will be too much to take in if we make any decision now. Is that okay?”

“Alright Saheed, we’ll talk tomorrow.”

“Goodnight love!”

“Are we still allowed to say that?”; Sarah said with a mixture of laughter and tears as could also be observed in Saheed’s voice.

“Goodnight Saheed”; she said, giving a deep sigh and cuddling her pillow afterwards as tears slowly ran down her eyes.



Part 3

To those who never (or have not) fully lived that dream, sincere, partner love relationship

I had noticed I was quite distracted when I knelt down to pray this morning. I attempted to brush my teeth afterwards, later I would however realise it has been 30mins since I had been staring deep into my own eyes through the mirror bathroom. I had looked through so hard that I could only picture my own direct profile in my head despite the many stickers I was fond on pasting on my mirrors. I had begun my morning with an unusual soliloquy.

“Why do I always expect so much? Stupid! Stupid!”; I was saying to myself, but this time I had actually begun brushing my teeth.

As more thoughts engulfed me, I once again watched myself through the mirror and how the toothpaste foamed and slowly dripped off my mouth.

“Is that someone knocking?”; I whispered to myself as I quickly rinsed off the foam from my mouth.

While my parents lived at Magodo in Lagos, I lived in Ibadan; alone in an apartment at Agodi estate, but the apartment was not mine. I used to live with my elder brother Godwin, but since he travelled off to Leeds for further studies, I had basically owned the place and taken responsibility over it, even though he still paid the rent.

The knock was coming from the garage door and there were only three persons who would proceed to knock on my garage door even when the entrance door was locked as though I were not home; my food delivery guy, my lousy neighbour (who had travelled) and Peter.

“Jide! Come and open this door!”

Peter was my particularly stubborn friend whom even after I had specifically told not to visit me this morning still did. We became friends while still in school and we both graduated from the University of Ibadan earlier this year. Peter could act clumsy most of the time, but deep down, he is truly one of the smartest persons I have ever known, and he was not just about being book-smart. I would often call him to be at my place some the mornings, when I had something important to talk about, or when we had nothing to do but argue. It was that sort of call that brought him to my place this morning.

“Oga! I told you not to bother coming again, and why so early today”; I said as I opened the door for him to enter.

“I know there is something wrong with you”; Peter said dragging me by the hand all the way to the sitting room.

“I know this is about that your friend yeah? You never really told me much about her. I think I only know her name. Whitney right? What’s the problem?”

“It is only Peter that would come to see me so early in the morning, only to ask me about the least thing I want to talk about.”; I said as I laughed at his request.

Peter had a way of convincing me to get stuff done though, even things I did not always want to do initially. So, although I had shrugged off his idea of talking about Whitney, I ended up telling him everything; right from how it started.

Whitney was the name of the girl that had got me rattling in my thoughts so early in the morning. I got to know Whitney through Nma; my younger sister who was like my confidante. They were course mates in the University of Ibadan and became close friends overtime. The first time I met Whitney was at a concert in school. She had come with Nma that day. Unlike Nma who was not much of a talker; her vibe was high on different levels and when we talked, it was like we had known each other

for years. She was so beautiful that no one feature could fit the description. Her eyes were brown and it often made a bold statement anytime one looked into it. She had a button nose and hair that curtained her oval face. She also had an electrifying smile. Had she smiled, then the world would smile with her. Whitney had the shape of an hour glass, an untainted expensive hour glass, with lovely thighs and an amazing fair skin. That day, she came to me in a white shirt and blue jeans. Her hair paved over her shoulders in mid-night black. Whitney was like the easiest person to get on with. She loved music, and it was thrilling the way she did. The first day we met, she spoke so much on the artistes that performed and some other interesting facts I had no idea about; which was fun. It was that time I had just got into the final year of my tertiary education. Whitney was in her third year; a nursing student. Whitney schooled and lived in Ibadan as a student, but the rest of her family lived in Lagos. We started off under the canopy of family friends, because through her friendship with Nma, our parents eventually got to be close friends as well. So, sometimes she would come to our family house during the holidays and we would talk all day. Things began to get interesting over time between us. My liking for her had gone beyond that reserved for a 'family friend,' that anytime I got to see her, I would sit closely with her to let our skins slide through each other, I would cajole her into watching movies with me in my room and we would lay close to each other in bed. As time advanced, I began to make more attempts at physical contacts with her – there was an indescribable comfort it brought especially since Whitney had soft skin. Maybe I was just being hysterical. But I always felt Whitney also wanted what I did.

"Wait! Y'all always laid on the same bed?"; Peter said bursting out in laughter.

"This boy, you couldn't just help it but notice only that fact!. Please can you let me to continue?"

"Yes sir!"

All I always wanted was someone who would come into my life by mistake but stay on purpose. However, even though I was so sure I was falling for her, I did not really know if it was mutual, and not trying to break what already existed between us, I had to stifle my thoughts and keep my feelings from her. I still did not completely back off though, because I continued to tell her stuff I would not have probably told anyone, ever. Whitney was one to spur a conversation out of nowhere, however, she was not much of a talker when it came to expressing her feelings. It made stuff a whole lot difficult. It seemed cute at first, but it eventually got tiring, because there were times where all I needed was for her to say something that came out directly from her heart. I just needed to know if she loved me.

“But hey! How do you define love?”; Peter asked.

“Well, I believe when I say I love someone, I mean I am at the level where I got nothing for that person but a genuine care and a steady means to show affection. That’s how it is with family.”

“But let’s talk a bit outside blood tie. To say I love someone. I mean that; I am attracted to the person by so many means; I want such a person to be happy and grow with me, but more importantly I want to be a major contributor of these feats in that person’s life also. There is just a high level of affection always stored in me for...”

“What makes you think you are not just being obsessed or plainly physically attracted? How do you separate that from love?”; Peter interjected.

“I’ll continue with the story to answer that.”

I did not only tell Whitney almost everything, I also pushed myself to ensure I always made her happy. As usual, school had a way of stressing students almost into a breakdown at certain times. Whitney was severely caught in one of those moments this time, and even though she did not tell me so many things, I could read her a few times. I knew she was not so happy at that time, so I went to pay her a surprise visit. Whitney lived alone; as she would always say “she loved her peace of mind.” I remember

getting to her house that day; her door was left open as I had discovered after several knocks on the door. Getting in, the place was all messed up. I could barely see the floor; with clothes, bottles and books all scattered round the whole place. She had passed out and was lying scathed on the floor. I would later find out that she was trying to *drink off her sorrows*. I called an Uber that day and got her to the clinic.

I looked after her that whole week and on one of those days, I was trapped in a tensed moment with her. We were alone, at my own place this time. It was in the sitting room and I was walking her out. There and then, I had to communicate my feelings, it was the best time to me. I could almost hear my heart beat out so loud when I eventually said, “I love you Whitney.” She had smiled but did not give a reply. I quickly followed after with an attempt to kiss her, but she stopped my lips with her hand.

“Doesn’t still explain how you are not just being obsessed or plainly physically attracted”; Peter reiterated.

Well, after she stopped the kiss, she actually apologised and said she was not so good with some certain body contacts. But it was not really that Whitney was bad with certain body contacts, she didn’t just want them with me. She said she never really liked me enough to get into a relationship. This was after I had actually poured out my heart to her and expressed my feelings. Whitney was about to leave my house back to her place that day, but after the attempted kiss, we sat back on the couch together as there was need to discuss *issues*. “See, I think I love you; I am not sure. I cannot really express how I feel about you. Sorry about that”; Whitney had said. After we had talked, I slowly walked her out through the gate. She remained unbothered about everything, like it never happened. I was a bit sad at first, and had called you yesterday night about it, but after so much thinking, I got to understand the whole reality and my position in it.

“Peter, the thing is that; attraction may be common, but what is rare is genuinely wanting to have someone who wants to grow with you and

build with you. I know I am not obsessed with anyone. But even so, obsession doesn't stand rejection; however, I still love her despite everything she said and did"; I chuckled as I said.

Life always had a way of playing me when it came to love. I finally fell in love with someone and it turned out to be a bipolar experience. I read once that we have to accept the fact that love is rare and cannot always be mutual. In real facts, it may never happen to some of us. If it does once, it does not come again. That is why it is called falling in love, we do not fall on purpose.

"And now the one you fall in love with is not in love with you"; Peter added immediately.

"Now I finally understand you Jide. You are scared you may never find true love again."

There was a brief silence after Peter's last statement, as though we were both contemplating the whole discuss. Most of our morning discussions ended that way. This time, it had lasted until Peter stretched out his hands with my *Playstation 4* console pads on them.

"Oga! Are you ready to be thrashed in this game or not?"; Peter said.

"You have not even won in any of the last five games!" I said as I burst into laughter.



ABOUT THE BOOK

A Trial Run is a compilation of three unique stories; with an afro-centric theme and particularly Nigerian, each story connects every young Nigerian to everyday realities they may have to experience.

The authority of publication and authorship of this book is under the name of Writing David Enterprise and becomes the first work published under the name.



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